



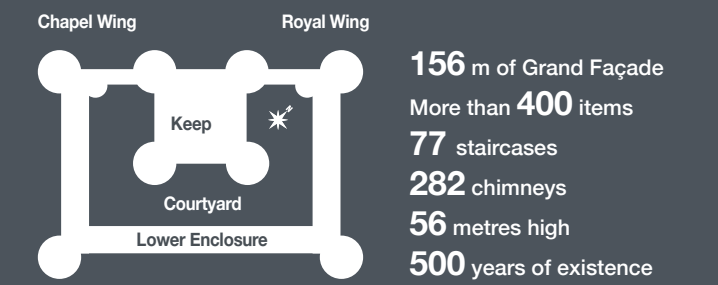
Enter the world of engineering

Chambord castle is one of the Renaissance's most amazing constructions. Built to glorify Francis I from 1519, it is above all a work of genius, the result of a collaboration between the best French and Italian artists, architects and master masons. More than just a residential or administrative castle, and even more than a hunting lodge, Chambord embodies an architectural utopia, an ideal, a harmonious whole.

Its history is unique: in the 16th and 17th centuries, François I, Henri II and Louis XIV came to stay, along with their courts, to enjoy the hunting, to dazzle their guests or to monitor the progress of the construction work. In the 18th century, relatives of the crown were occasionally allowed to use it. Then it became the private estate of Henri, Count of Chambord, the last descendant of the elder branch of the Bourbons, before being bought by the State a century later, in 1930. All Chambord's residents have been keen to preserve this jewel of the French Renaissance, in which François I's aspirations and Leonardo da Vinci's ideas are expressed in a variety of ways.

Visit Chambord

Chambord can be explored without having to follow a specific itinerary; the building was conceived so that visitors may lose themselves in it but are then able to return to its core, the fascinating double-spiral staircase. To relive the different centuries of the castle's occupation, you can walk through the royal apartments and dwellings. The tour ends on the terraces, with their stunning view over the gardens and the estate.



WHAT TO VISIT ON THE GROUND FLOOR

2 The Jean-Martin Demézil audio-visual room
The two computer-generated films shown continuously in this room are a valuable introduction to a tour of the castle.
Chambord, an architectural fantasy: two-part film on the history and architecture of the castle (⌚ 18 mins)
The lost project of 1519: film on Chambord's genesis (⌚ 7 mins)

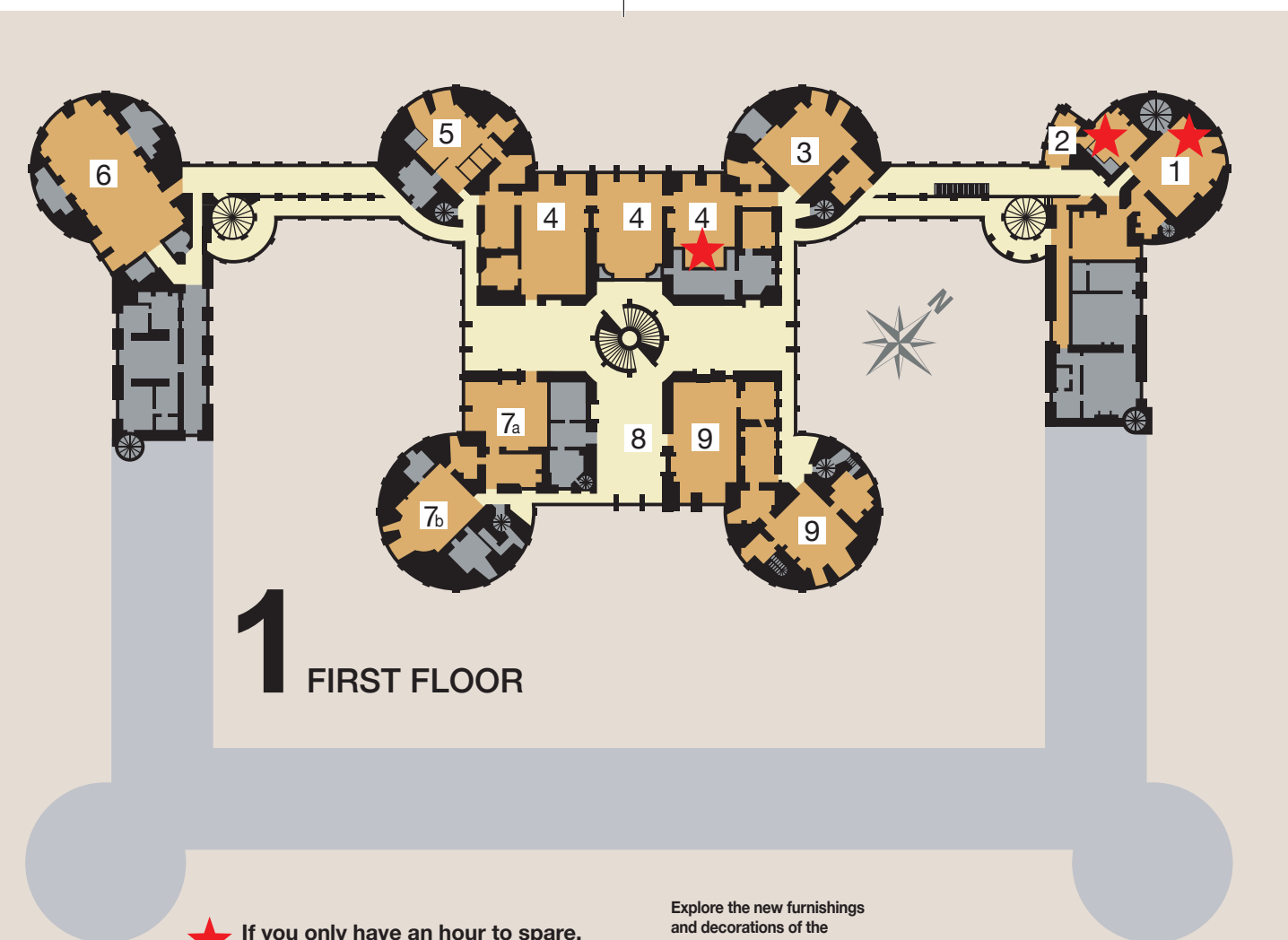
1 The double-spiral staircase and the plan of the keep
The grand staircase, undoubtedly inspired by Leonardo da Vinci, is a monument in its own right. Located at the centre of the keep, it is formed of two flights of steps that wind one above the other around a central core pierced with windows. If you are using the stairs with at least one other person, split up to experience it! You will be able to follow each other with your eyes throughout the climb... but you will never cross paths!
The rooms that frame it form a Greek cross. They give access to the former living quarters, located in the corners of the keep. Here is Chambord's other great architectural innovation: the use of the Greek cross plan, usually used in the construction of Italian Renaissance churches.



3 6 7 8 The reception rooms
The ground floor houses three large reception rooms named "Salle des Bourbons" (Bourbon Hall) (3), "Salle des Illustres" (Hall of Fame) (6) and "Salle des Chasses" (Hunting Hall) (7). You can admire paintings and sculptures on the theme of hunting, distinguished characters from Chambord's past and the royal family in the 18th and 19th centuries.

4 The 18th-century kitchens
From 1782, the rooms in the keep's western lodgings were reserved for the catering services. Immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the kitchens of the Marquis de Polignac, governor of Chambord at the end of the 18th century, by visiting the former pantries, pastry kitchen, pantry and fruit store. Don't miss the huge preparation kitchen with its hood, bread oven and collection of antique objects.

9 10 The carriage room and the lapidary depository
The royal wing's ground floor houses an extraordinary set of horse-drawn vehicles on display, composed of three sedans, a coupe and a carriage (9). Commissioned by the Count of Chambord in 1871 for his hypothetical entry into Paris as future king, they have remained unused and are in an outstanding state of preservation. Another of this space's curiosities: the lapidary depository where some of the castle's former decorations are preserved, such as fragments of the castle's original lantern tower (10).

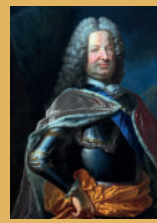


WHAT TO VISIT ON THE 1st FLOOR

1 2 François I's residence (16th century)
The royal residence, located on the first floor of this wing, was built between 1539 and 1545. It includes a vast room measuring 80 m² (1), a wardrobe, a closet and a splendid oratory adorned with a vault carved with François I's emblems (2). This wing also houses the castle's former great state room, the so-called "King's Room". Part of the royal residence benefited from a major refurbishment in 2019. Reed mats on the walls and floor, floating hangings and priceless tapestries, travel furniture and curiosities: these rooms allow you to imagine the atmosphere of the castle when the king and his court came to stay.



3 The Queen's bedchamber (17th century)
This room, which may have been François I's initial bedroom, before the construction of the royal wing, is now furnished as a 17th century bedroom. Queen Maria Theresa of Austria and then the Dauphine [wife of the Dauphin, heir to the throne] slept in it when Louis XIV came to stay.



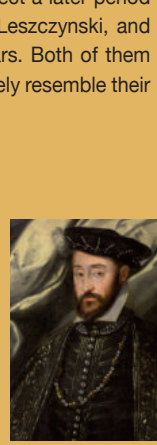
4 The ceremonial apartment (17th-18th centuries)
Louis XIV's ceremonial apartment was built around 1680 in the centre of the grand façade. A highly symbolic position for the Sun King! To create it, the keep's first-floor plan had to be modified. The great north west room overlooking the central staircase was closed off to form a series of four rooms: the guardhouse, two antechambers and the ceremonial bedroom. In these spaces, the rich decor and furnishings reflect a later period of occupation. Louis XV allowed his father-in-law Stanislas Leszczyński, and then the Marshal of Saxony, to use Chambord for a few years. Both of them lived in the former ceremonial apartment. The rooms now closely resemble their mid-18th century descriptions.

6 The chapel
Measuring 250 m², the chapel is the largest room in the castle. It is perfectly integrated into the tower and the rectangular part of the west wing, so that it is relatively unnoticeable from the outside. Its construction began during the reign of François I but was completed a century and a half later, during the reign of Louis XIV. The stages of construction can be seen in the carved decor: from the base of the walls to the vault, it features François I's emblems (F and a salamander), those of his son Henri II (reversed crescent moon) and of the Sun King (Land the sun). Can you find them?



5 7 The 18th century apartments
The keep's western and southern quarters display various apartments furnished and decorated in the style of the 18th century: the "Governor's bedchamber" (5), the "Laurel bedchamber" (7a) and the "Princess of Conti's bedchamber" (7b). The layout of the rooms has changed considerably since the Renaissance and the Grand Siècle: here, the bedrooms are reduced in size due to the addition of interior wooden partitions and plastered canvas ceilings. A parquet floor has replaced the terracotta floor tiles and the walls are covered with wallpaper, fabric and/or panelling. See how these changes, which took place at the end of the 18th century, made the rooms more comfortable and easier to heat for Chambord's permanent guests!

8 Louis XIV's theatre
In the 17th century, entertainments and plays punctuated the Sun King and his court's evenings when they were staying at Chambord. A small theatre was created on the keep's 1st floor, facing the main staircase. Molière presented his plays there, in particular the premieres of his comédie-ballets *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669) and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670). A suggestion of how the old theatre might have looked is displayed at the precise location of Louis XIV's theatre. The effect is striking: as if a new performance were about to begin...



9 The Count of Chambord's museum
The seven rooms that make up this "museum" show the astonishing destiny of the Count of Chambord, the unfortunate 19th century pretender to the French throne. Henri de Bourbon became the owner of the castle and its grounds thanks to a national subscription launched at his birth. He spent most of his life in exile. However, he devoted his fortune to restoring, maintaining and enriching Chambord, which has been open to visitors since 1821. The hundreds of objects gathered within this space tell the story of the lives of the prince and the monument in the midst of a troubled century which was nonetheless committed to preserving its historic legacy.



Practical information



Certain rooms that are usually open to the public may occasionally be closed without notice.
The regulations concerning tours can be consulted at the castle entrance and on the estate's website.
Anyone who damages the monument or the collections will be expelled and prosecuted.

Accessibility



Spaces accessible to people with reduced mobility (see map):
Reception / Ticket office / Ground floor of the keep and its rooms
Audio-visual room / Carriage Room / Café / Toilets / Shop

Shooting sticks and wheelchairs can be loaned to you at the reception desk, subject to availability.
Guide dogs are allowed inside the monument upon presentation of a certificate.
The HistoPad tour tool has been adapted to allow access to the commentaries on the upper-floor rooms.



HistoPad digital mediation tool adapted for hearing disabilities
(includes commentaries in French Sign Language)
Audio-visual room: films with subtitles in five languages (French, English, German, Spanish, Italian).



HistoPad digital mediation tool adapted for visual disabilities
(French audio-description version)
Tactile model of the castle available in the Bourbon Hall.
Tactile mouldings of the vault available in the Renaissance residence, on the 2nd floor of the keep.



Pushchairs can be lent to you at the reception desk, subject to availability.

To accompany your tour of the castle

Guided tour (1½ hours) • In-depth tour on weekends and public holidays (3h)
• Fun tour during vacations and public holidays (1½ hours) • Workshops for families during school holidays
• Riddle books: Cassandra the Salamander in the castle or the gardens • HistoPad tour tablet



What to see and do around the castle

• Seasonal equestrian show in the stables • Bicycle, boat and electric cart hire • Nature rally to download onto your smartphone • 4x4 tour of the reserve • Workshop for families during school holidays • Guided tour of Chambord's vegetable gardens • Wander around the canal (4 km)
• The Grand Promenade: 20 kilometres of trails exploring Chambord Estate's wealth and biodiversity. Walking routes with commentaries to download.

WHAT TO VISIT ON THE 2nd FLOOR

1 2 The vaulted rooms and the Maréchal de Saxe's theatre

On the second floor of the keep, the four rooms arranged in a Greek cross around the main staircase are covered with impressive carved coffered vaults. They look like ancient triumphal arches or church ceilings, and are entirely decorated with Francis I's emblems. Alternate salamanders and crowned "F"s in their hundreds glorify Chambord's Builder-King.

Will you be able to locate the vault's only – and mysterious – inverted F?
Hint: it is located in the vaulted northwest room, which was transformed into a theatre for Maurice de Saxe (many vestiges remain visible) (2).

3 Hunting at Chambord from the 16th to the 20th centuries

The southern quarter houses a permanent exhibition dedicated to Chambord's distinguished hunting tradition. Numerous works of art on display tell the story of the kings' fascination with this activity, but also of the management of the estate over time. Do not miss the priceless tapestries, the *Hunts of King François Hangings*, and the astonishing 19th century horse-drawn hunting boat. In the first room, a podium displays mounted specimens of animals traditionally present in the park at Chambord in the 16th–18th centuries.

4 The children's quarters

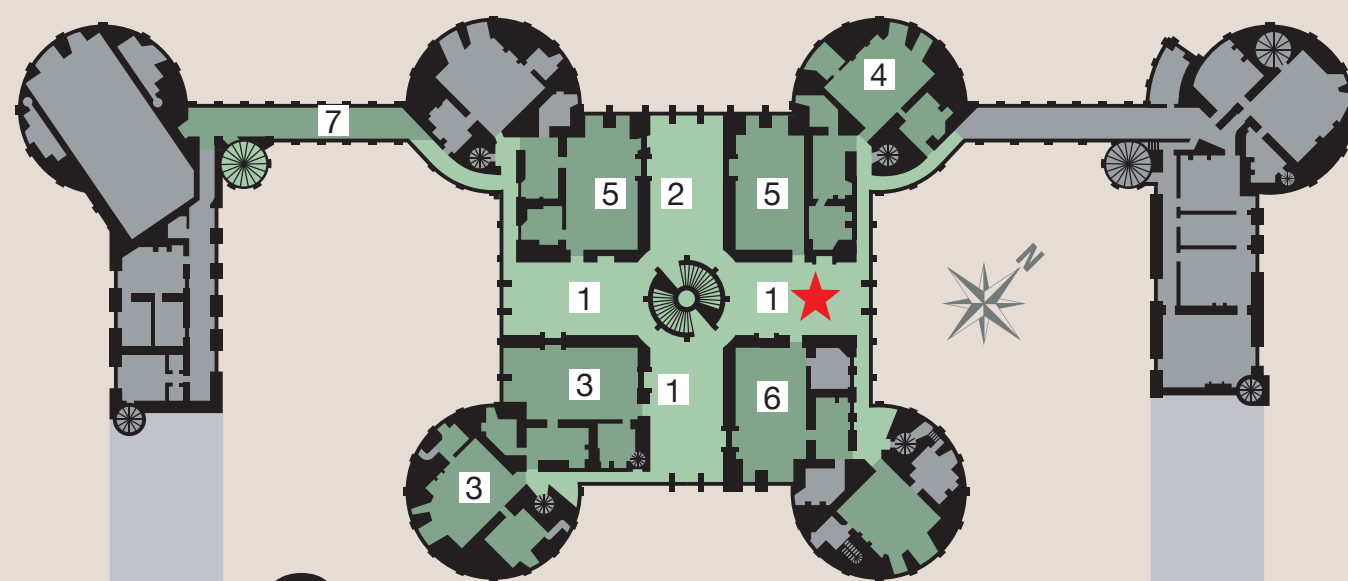
Chambord offers an area for exploring which is dedicated to young people and families. By means of around fifteen digital devices, and entertaining sensory experiments, learn more about François I and the history and architecture of the castle! For little ones (3–5 year-olds) there is a curiosity area with early learning activities and a reading corner.

5 6 7 Temporary exhibition rooms – Renaissance Residence – Trophy Gallery

This floor's north and west quarters (5) host contemporary or heritage exhibitions, depending on the cultural programme.

The eastern section (6), which is free of furniture, allows you to explore all the rooms that make up a Renaissance courtier's residence.

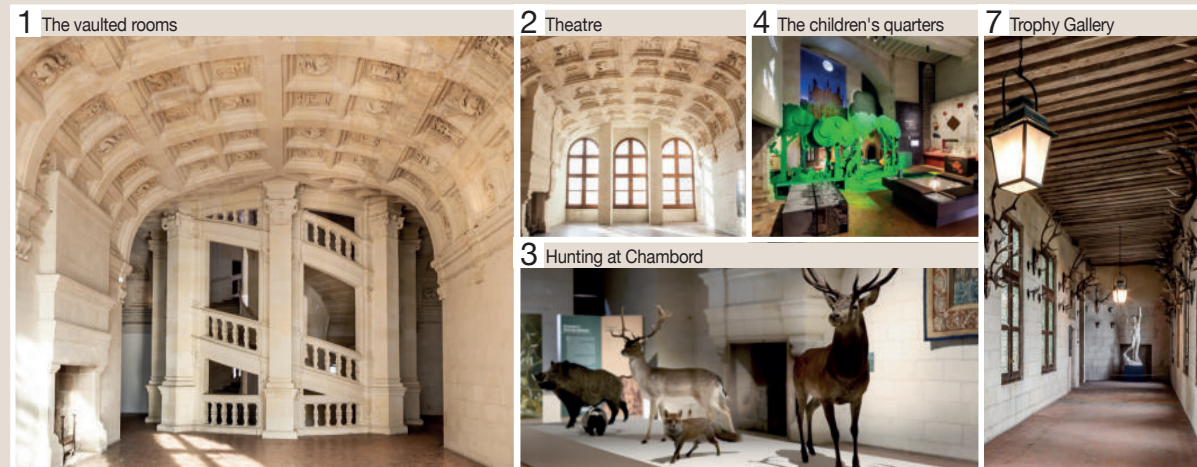
Finally, don't miss the gallery in the chapel wing known as the "Trophy Gallery" (7), where deer cullings from Marion Schuster's collection (20th century) are exhibited.



2 SECOND FLOOR

★ If you only have an hour to spare, follow the stars!

Contemplate the magnificent vaults carved with Francis I's emblems. The surrounding rooms host temporary contemporary or heritage exhibitions.



WHAT TO VISIT ON THE TERRACES

1 2 The Castle terraces

At the top of the keep, the grand staircase leads onto the terraces (1) which offer a panoramic view of the Estate, the village and the surrounding gardens. The impression is of entering a small celestial city, complete with pavilions and streets: an incredible sight.

The roofs of the towers and pavilions are bristling with chimney stacks, dormers, stair turrets and lanterns. Richly carved and decorated with slates arranged in geometric shapes, these buildings give Chambord a unique silhouette, inspired by Gothic architecture. In the centre of this ensemble rises the lantern-tower (2), topped by a royal crown with a fleur-de-lys raised to the sky. It may symbolize the king at the centre of his kingdom.

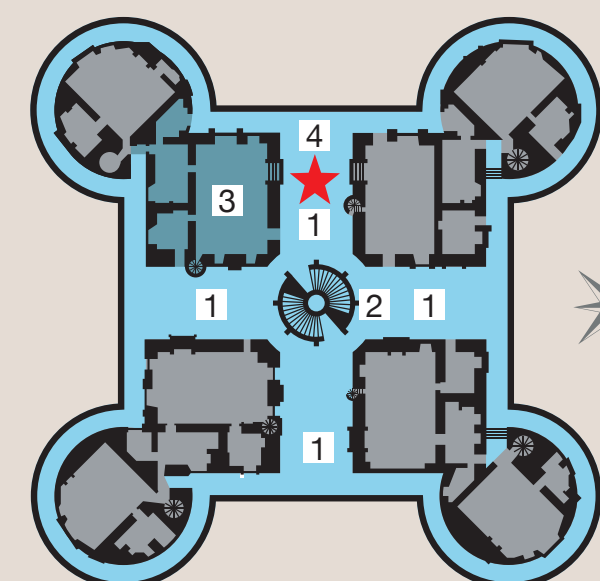
3 Chambord, 1939–1945: Save some of the world's beauty

In 1939, thousands of works of art from the national museums were sent in convoys to eleven castles and abbeys in central and western France to preserve them from the perils of war. Chambord castle, which was closed to the public at the time, housed a multitude of masterpieces from national and private collections – notably from the Louvre and Versailles – throughout the Second World War, making it the largest repository in France. Thanks to innovative installations and mediation devices (screenings, films, etc.), this permanent exhibition underlines the major role played by Chambord in the preservation of humanity's treasures, and pays tribute to those who participated in it.

4 View over the French gardens

From the terraces, you can enjoy a prime view of Chambord's French gardens which were restored in 2016–2017, the result of sixteen years of scientific research and an outstanding project. They reproduce the exact layout of the lost 18th century gardens, of which some vestiges survived until 1970. Their grassy parterres, their flower beds planted with yew topiaries and flowers, their alleys, alignments and staggered tree plantings are governed by the same rules of symmetry and geometry as the castle itself.

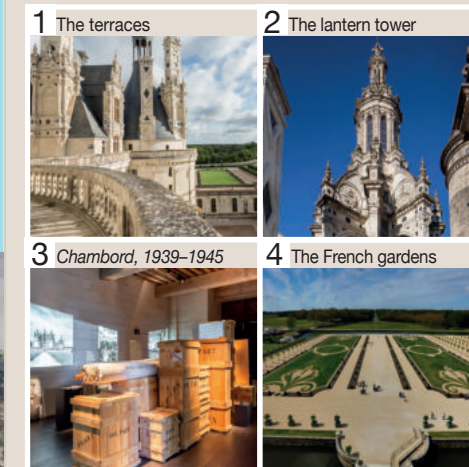
Take the time to admire them from the terraces before going back down to the ground floor. From there, you can access the platform of the gardens and stroll through the alleys at your leisure.



The castle terraces offer both a view of the roofs, a strange symbiosis of Flamboyant Gothic and Italian Renaissance, and a magnificent panorama over Chambord Estate.

3 THE TERRACES

★ If you only have an hour to spare, follow the stars!



CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORY OF CHAMBORD

1515 François I becomes king of France.

1519 Death of Leonardo da Vinci. Opening of the construction site at Chambord.

1539 The keep is completed. François I welcomes the Emperor Charles V to the castle.

1545 François I's last stay at Chambord. Completion of the Royal Wing.

1547 Death of François I. His son Henry II, now king, continues the construction of the chapel wing.

1556 Construction is suspended. The chapel wing and the lower enclosure are not completed.

1625 Gaston d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIII, receives Chambord in his apanage (portion of royal domain granted by kings to their younger sons or brothers).

1641–1642 First restoration works at the castle.

1660 Death of Gaston d'Orléans. Chambord returns to the crown. Louis XIV finishes creating Chambord's park.

1684–1686 Completion of the castle and development of its surroundings. Louis XIV's last stay at Chambord.

1725–1733 Stanislas Leszczyński, Louis XV's father-in-law, moves to Chambord. Planting of the French gardens.

1745 Louis XV offers the use of Chambord to Maréchal Maurice de Saxe.

1748–1750 The Maréchal stays at the castle with his cavalry regiments. He dies there.

1782–1789 The park and the castle are entrusted to the Royal stud farm directed by the Marquis de Polignac.

1792 The castle's furniture is sold at auction after the Revolution.

1809 Napoleon Bonaparte offers Chambord to Maréchal Louis Alexandre-Berthier, Prince of Wagram.

1821 After it was put up for sale, the Estate was offered to Henri, Duke of Bordeaux, the last of the elder branch of the Bourbons. The castle opens its gates to visitors.

1840 The castle is added to the list of France's historic monuments.

1871 The first and only stay of Henri de Bourbon, now Count of Chambord.

1883 Death of the Prince. His nephews, the princes of Bourbon-Parme, inherit the estate.

1930 The Chambord estate is bought by the State.

1939–1945 Thousands of works of art from French collections are moved to the castle for safekeeping.

1981 The castle is listed as a world heritage site (UNESCO).

1997 The park is listed as a historical monument.

2019 Chambord celebrates the 500th anniversary of the beginning of construction.



TOUR PLAN CHAMBORD CASTLE

